THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY) (a) to (c) The Tsunami disaster has caused extensive damage to life and property. 10273 lives were lost and 5823 people were reported to be missing most of whom are feared dead. The State Governments and UT Administrations had immediately launched search and rescue operations with the help of the Armed Forces, Para Military Forces, local community and Non Governmental Organizations. The dead bodies were retrieved/recovered and were cremated/buried as per the due process including identification wherever feasible. The whole process took a few days, which generally happens with disasters of such magnitude.

Criteria adopted to confer Bharat Ratna

211. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the criteria adopted by Government of India to confer Bharat Ratna on any person;

(b) whether there is any committee which scrutinize the names of the people for Bharat Ratna;

(c) the terms of reference given to the committee; and

(d) the details of members of the committee which scrutinises the name for this honour?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT) (a) Bharat Ratna is awarded for exceptional service towards the advancement of art, literature and science and in recognition of public service of the highest order.

(b) to (d) Recommendations or award of Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister to the President. He is free to consult anyone he chooses.

Visit of Tsunami hit areas

212. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he visited all the 'Tsunami' affected regions and seen for himself the quality of relief exercises and status of the socio-economic rehabilitation of the survivors;